

Motto - "Pro Rege, lege, et grege."

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THE HISTORY of the ISLAND of RHODES.

"fuit Ilium et ingens gloria Teucrorum."  
Virgil.

These words might well refer to Rhodes instead of Troy - to Rhodes which still, with the other Isles of Greece, lies basking in the eternal summer of which Byron sang, but which now retains nothing but crumbling ruins to tell of the splendour that shone there in ancient and mediaeval times. The island, which lies off the south-west corner of Asia Minor, measures barely 50 miles in length, and about 20 in breadth; but though on the map it may look insignificant, yet at one time as an independent State, it attained to a power altogether out of proportion to its size; and from the very beginning until the present day, has been dragged into almost every war that has been waged in the eastern Mediterranean. During the course of its long history, Rhodes has been at one time or another under the dominion of Persian and Macedonian, Greek and Roman, Infidel Saracen and Christian Knight, and has come finally to belong to the Turk who is lord of the island to-day. Ships of all kinds have sheltered in the Rhodian harbours - from the primitive Phoenician trading vessel of 1500 B.C. to the modern Italian Man-of-War in 1912.

The island is almost certainly of volcanic origin, having been thrown up from the floor of the sea by an earthquake or eruption in the early ages. This fact has given rise to the myth which Pindar relates in his Seventh Olympic ode. The gods, we are told, met one day in council and divided the world between them. Each one got a share, save Helios, who was absent, faithful to his duty of driving the chariot of the sun across the heavens. But Zeus was just, and would have recast the lots on his behalf, had not Helios sighted a land rising from the depths of the sea that promised rich provision both for man and for his cattle. This was Rhodes, and Helios claimed it for his own. Then, after it was risen above the waves, he dispelled the mists that lingered about it, and made the land fruitful, and ruled over the people who dwelt there. Evidently the island was well-favoured /



favoured by nature, for 'tis said that its name is taken from the rose which blossomed there, and which, with the image of Helios himself, is stamped on many of the Rhodian coins.

If Rhodes was fortunate in its guardian deity, so also was it fortunate in the men who came as colonists to its shores: for these were of two different types, each bringing their own contribution of skill and enterprise to the island. The Phoenicians, whose strength was in their commerce, came first, as early as about 1500 B.C. and founded on the coast the three ancient towns of Rhodes - Lindos, Camiros and Ialysos. After an interval of about three centuries they were followed at different times by various bands of Dorian Greeks who were powerful enough to drive out the Phoenicians and occupy their towns. These Greeks, unlike the men whom they displaced, were dependent for their livelihood mainly on agriculture, so that the island whose natural harbours had been adapted and used by its earlier colonists, was now tilled and prepared to support a larger number of inhabitants. The expulsion of the Phoenicians had this additional advantage, that it prevented the establishment of a heterogeneous populace, which would doubtless have proved a source of weakness to the city-state in after years.

The Dorian settlers, however, were not content, nor indeed for long would they have been able, to support themselves on the produce of the little island they had chosen as their home. They showed themselves much more enterprising than the people in the cities from which they had come. Whereas the Greeks of the mainland considered Italy and Sicily too remote for colonisation, the Rhodians planted colonies on the Mediterranean shores as far west as Spain, while other of their ships were occupied in the suppression of piracy.. To the Rhodians also is due the honour of founding, with some help from Crete, the first Greek colony in Sicily. This colony was at Gela, on the south coast of the island, and was planted about the year 700 B.C. Numerous settlements were also made on the neighbouring southern coast of Asia Minor; and colonists sailed north through the Bosphorus to Apollonia /

Apollonia on the shores of the Black Sea, and south to a trading station in the Delta of the Nile. During this period of expansion, the three cities of Lindos, Camiros and Ialysos remained separate, the first of these, Lindos, showing on the whole the most conspicuous maritime enterprise. The development of each proceeded on peaceful lines until the whole island was threatened by the westward advance of the Persians.

In 540 B.C. the army of the great King under Cyrus marched against the Greek cities in the mainland of Asia Minor, and captured most of them. But from him Rhodes was still safe, because he had none but land forces. As soon, however, as the Persians mustered a fleet, which they did later under Darius, the island fell an easy prey and was captured in 490 by the second Persian expedition on its way towards Greece. This expedition ended in the repulse at Marathon, but the Persians did not loose their hold on Rhodes, where they remained supreme for ten years. At the end of this time the three cities on the island, uniting with other Greek states against their common foe, who was again threatening, joined the Delian Confederacy in 480. The result of this step was two-fold, for while it enabled the island to share in the fruits of the victory of Salamis the same year, and thus set it free from Persian dominion, it brought the Rhodians very soon under the yoke of the people of Athens, who maintained their authority and influence in Rhodes until almost the end of that century.

That the power exercised by the Athenians over their "confederates" in Rhodes was very considerable is shown by the fact that during the Peloponnesian War which broke out in 431, the Rhodians not only had to lend assistance against Sparta, but were compelled to serve against other Dorians in Syracuse, and even against their own colonists in Gela. It is also remarkable that after the Athenian arms had suffered defeat at Syracuse in 412, the Rhodian cities were not able to follow the example of other states like Chios and Cidnos by a revolt from Athens. But the people were rebellious in spirit. In the following year when a party of oligarchs was bold enough to take /



take the plunge and invite the protection of a strong Spartan fleet, they were easily persuaded to rebel openly from Athens. But this proved to be a bad bargain; for though the Spartan fleet hovered about, it did not protect the coast from Athenian raiders, who did much damage to the island, especially in 407 when they were led by Alcibiades. The Spartans were still in power at Rhodes when the Peloponnesian War came to a close some three years later.

The year 408 B.C. is an important date in the history of the island. The three cities, which so far had considered themselves independent states, now united to found and build the single city of Rhodes. The site which they chose for their new capital was on the coast, at the north-eastern extremity of the island. The harbours which adjoined it were excellent, and surpassed even those of Lindos, and the gradual slope of the ground from the sea-board to the top of the eminence on which the acropolis was built was admirably suited to the requirements of the architect, Hippodamus of Miletus.

For twenty years after its foundation, the young city state lived through a period during which its internal development was marked by a constant struggle between the rival forces of democracy and oligarchy. The fortunes of the conflict corresponded roughly with those of the desultory war in which Athens and Sparta were engaged at the same time; for the Rhodian democrats were backed by the Athenians, and the oligarchs by the Spartans. It was the democratic party that made the first move in 395, when, by driving the ships of Sparta from the harbour, they severed the connection which had been made in 411. But in 391 the oligarchs were back in power, and remained dominant only for three years, for immediately the Athenian Confederacy was proposed in 378, the democrats rose again in strength, and having gained the upper hand, enrolled Rhodes as one of the confederate states. The result of this was similar to that which happened in the earlier Delian league, for Athens, not content with being a confederate, grew to be a master. It is notable, however, that by this time Rhodes was strong enough to refuse to be coerced into submission, and along with Cos, Chios and Byzantium, ceded from the confederacy even while the democracy /

democracy was still in power. This secession led immediately to a naval war in which the four allied states found themselves able to oppose successfully the might even of Athens.

During all this period we have before us the interesting spectacle of the city finding itself. It had begun to realise the importance of its action as an individual state; it was tasting the enjoyment of a growing power at sea; its internal constitution was shaping itself towards a modified form of democratic administration. And thus the way was being prepared for the greatness and prosperity which the near future was to unfold.

Amid this general hopefulness and growing sense of their own importance, the people of Rhodes must have been somewhat humiliated by their temporary conquest at the hands of the queen of Caria. This warrior queen was Artemisia, who is better known to history as a dutiful widow, and is more famous for the extravagant memorial she raised to her husband, Mausolus. By a ruse her soldiers, in 357, obtained entrance into the harbours of Rhodes and invested the city. But nothing more serious came as a result of this conquest save a statue of Artemisia herself, which, in vanity, she had ordered to be placed in one of the temples in Rhodes, and which, on account of a superstitious reverence which the Rhodians always showed for dedicated statues, was allowed to remain standing, though in later years it was surrounded by a high wall and hidden from view.

The island was destined to another conquest before it should enter on its term of fullest power and independence - this time by that prince of conquerors, Alexander the Great. As far back as 360 B.C. Philip of Macedon had been dreaming of conquest and alarming Greece. In 341, urged by the eloquence of Demosthenes in his third Philippic, Rhodes had allied herself with Athens to resist the Macedonian. But no resistance was of any avail against Alexander, who inherited the power and ambition of the assassinated Philip. With invincible strength he made his advance: within four years Persia, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt lay at his feet, before he proceeded to extend /

extend his conquests further east. After the capitulation of Damascus and Tyre in 332, the citizens of Rhodes deemed it prudent also to submit to Alexander, and so were numbered among the subjects of his empire, until his death in 323. The Rhodians then revolted, and were again free.

The island had not suffered at all under the rule of Alexander. The nine quiet years under his sway mark the beginning of the most prosperous period in the whole of the long history of Rhodes. In the general expansion of Levantine trade which took place at this time, and which was due in large measure to the foundation of Alexandria on the Egyptian coast, she had a large share. Merchant ships, bearing to Greece the products of the corn-lands of Egypt, made Rhodes a port of call, as also did those which carried wine or fish to Alexandria from Greece and the Black Sea. At the end of the third century B.C., the trade of Rhodes rivalled that of Athens and Alexandria; her standard of coinage and maritime law became widely adopted; and she was recognised to be the first naval power in the eastern Mediterranean. The prosperity of the state encouraged the development of art and learning, and a number of famous philosophers and poets were born in, or were attracted to the city. Among those who flourished about this time may be mentioned Eudemos, the disciple of Aristotle, and Apollonius, the epic poet who wrote the "Argonautica".

The Rhodian administrators of this period wisely recognised that the prosperity and wealth of their island rested on commerce and not on conquest, so that the settled policy they adopted was to remain neutral as far as possible in any national dispute that might arise, and to take sides and engage in war only when their commercial prosperity or independence was threatened. Excellent, however, though this plan was, it could not keep the city always at peace. The times were too unsettled for that, and like other states in the neighbourhood, Rhodes was dragged against her will into the wars that soon broke out between the jealous successors of Alexander.

Of all the generals among whom Alexander had divided his empire /



empire, perhaps the most ambitious was Antigonus to whom Phrygia had been assigned, and who was very soon aiming at a universal conquest. When he meditated an attack on his brother Officer, Ptolemy of Egypt, he first made an attempt to secure the alliance of, or the dominion over, Rhodes, whose harbours, lying as they did on the trade route to Egypt, he hoped to be able to use for his war vessels. The Rhodians were in a dilemma, for while they desired then as always to remain neutral, they could not afford to allow any advantage to an enemy of Egypt, with which country their commercial relations were most intimate. The result was that, when pressed by Antigonus, they resolved to side with Ptolemy, and brought upon themselves that famous blockade which was conducted by Demetrius, the son of Antigonus, and which earned for him the proud title of Poliorcetes. Demetrius, having landed his troops, ravaged the whole island and proceeded to storm the city. He constructed an immense engine of war which was called the Heleopolis and attempted, by undermining and assault, to effect an entrance. The besieged were aided by supplies from Ptolemy and managed thus to hold out for so long that peace was made on honourable terms, and Demetrius retired.

The siege was raised in 304 B.C., and thereafter the Rhodians conducted their affairs with such prudence and success that their power and influence was greater even than before. In 280 they built the world-famed Colossus - a huge brazen statue of their god, Helios, fit emblem of the splendour of their state. The neutral policy which had been adopted continued to be pursued, yet the Rhodians were not slow to take the sea against other powers who in any way attempted to injure their commercial prosperity or endangered the safety of their ~~mercant~~ merchant men. Thus in 236 they fitted out ships of war to suppress the pirates of Crete, and some years later, started a vigorous campaign against Byzantium and the Kings of Pergamos and Pontus who had threatened to close the Black Sea trade route. Rhodes was now in a position to make it wise policy for other states to retain her good favour - a fact which was strikingly demonstrated /

demonstrated in 227. In that year after the great earthquake in the island by which the greater part of the city was destroyed and the Colossus thrown down, numerous and very costly gifts were sent for the rebuilding of the city from Egypt, Syria, Sicily, and Macedonia, and from the various states on the mainland in Asia Minor.

It was just at this time, when Rhodes was at the height of her prosperity, and feeling the power of the wealth and influence which were hers, that the growing empire of Rome began to stretch eastwards, and came into conflict with the ambitious Philip V. of Macedonia. About this time too, Rhodes herself commenced a more aggressive policy in foreign affairs. Knowing now how secure her commercial interests were, she was no longer content with protecting these and maintaining her independence, but dreamed of extending her power over the Greek cities in Asia Minor, and the other islands round about. She was already mistress of several towns in Caria and of a number of the neighbouring islands - all of which dependencies had probably originated as Rhodian colonies. As a result of this desire for expansion, Rhodes at first seems to have resented the interference of Rome in the East, as a power which might check her own advance, for her ambassadors continually urged Philip to make peace with the Romans. This was their attitude during the first Macedonian war which came to an end with the Treaty of Phoenice in 205. Rome, however, could not be kept out of the affairs of the East. The Rhodians recognised this, and wisely changed their policy, attempting now to make use of the Roman power in furthering their own ambitious schemes, without allowing themselves to be drawn under the yoke of Rome. In 201, therefore, when Philip began to move again and was seizing independent cities in Asia Minor, the Rhodians, along with the Pergamenes (who were now *socii Romanorum*) reported the matter to the Senate at Rome. No response, however, was made to them, and the two states were left to resist Philip themselves. This the Rhodians were not slow to do, because they had an additional reason for a quarrel with Philip - namely, that he had been treating with Antiochus of Syria to /



to divide Egypt - an event which they for commercial reasons alone were bound to oppose. The combined fleets of the allies were at first successful, but later, met with a severe reverse at Lade, after which Philip seized the Rhodian cities in Caria. At last, when the Macedonian laid siege to Abydos, the Romans realised that the position was a serious one, and sent a fleet to join the allies. This fleet was powerful enough to capture a few islands in the Aegean Sea and some towns on the coast of Euboea, and in this way so to impress the eastern states that all save Corinth, Sparta, and Argos, followed the lead of Rhodes and threw in their lot with the Romans. After this, the tide of fortune turned. Corinth was besieged in 198 and the Rhodians were able to recapture their towns in Caria. Next year Philip was decisively defeated at Cynoscephalae by the consul Flaminius, and though the war dragged on for three or four years, he had eventually to submit to hard terms, and leave all the Greek cities free.

No sooner was this war concluded than the Romans had to begin another - with Antiochus of Syria, who had entered Greece with an army on the invitation of the dissatisfied Aetolians. Again Rhodes placed herself under the protection of Rome and set the example to other Greek cities. The Rhodian fleet did good service in the war, and though defeated once by the Syrian fleet under Polyxenides, an exiled Rhodian, it soon made good that loss. Antiochus was driven from Asia Minor in 190, after the battle of Magnesia ad Sipylum, by Scipio, who thereupon set himself to effect a Settlement of Asia, which made it practically, if not in name, a Roman Province.

The aggressive policy of the Rhodians is rendered manifest in the claims they made and the decisions they advocated during these two wars, and in the treaties which followed them. Thus before Cynoscephalae their ambassadors had claimed from Philip the evacuation of all towns in Caria and the freedom of all markets and ports in Asia Minor; and in the settlement of Scipio the Rhodian envoys asked that all the Greek cities in Asia Minor should be given their independence, for they hoped that over these independent cities they themselves /

themselves might exercise at first a patronage, which, by adopting shrewd measures, they might turn later on into a sovereignty. Scipio granted them their wish in part, and Lycia, with the exception of Telmissos and the greater part of Caria, south of Meander, were placed under the sway of Rhodes. It is a strange fact that the Rhodians misused their power when once they had it. Too eager to show their mastery over their dependencies, they so irritated and enraged the Lycians that they provoked them to war.

The next period of Rhodian history is interesting, because it shows how Rhodes, while maintaining friendly relations with Rome, attempted to keep herself independent of the Empire's extending sway, and so incurred the displeasure of the Senate and people, so that she very nearly suffered the fate of the less powerful states and cities which had already been conquered and made provinces. Too rapid was the eastward spread of the power of Rome, and the extension of her sphere of influence, to be surveyed with equanimity by the Rhodian people. They noted with dismay how Rome was gradually sucking in all the independent states, and saw in her not only a great barrier to their expansion, but even a threat to their own independence. Thus there grew up a powerful anti-Roman party within the walls of the city. This disaffection was made evident at Rome through various channels. The Lycians, for instance, had lodged a just complaint against Rhodian oppression; and with the state of Pergamos, the sworn ally of Rome, the Rhodians were having continual territorial disputes. Matters came to a head in 171 when the third Macedonian War broke out. Rhodes was not prompt in assisting Rome. The two parties in the state were about equally strong, and a decision was delayed. The Roman envoy was received, ships were promised, but this did not prevent the reception of the envoy of Perseus of Macedon. Still, in effect, Rhodes remained neutral, for no efficient help was given to either side, and the Romans, unaided, defeated Perseus at Pydna in 168. Nevertheless, considerable resentment was shown in Rome at the equivocal conduct of the Rhodians, and it might have gone badly /

badly for them at this time had not Cato taken their part in the debates in the Senate-house. As it was, the treaty of friendship was broken off; and after the circumstances of the case had been investigated by Roman envoys, all the prominent anti-Roman leaders who had not saved themselves by flight, were put to death. Further, in the new settlement of Asia which followed the close of the war in 166, a severe blow was struck at the dominion of Rhodes in that Caria and Lycia were declared free, and the Rhodians were compelled to evacuate Cannos and Stratoniceia. Another blow was dealt at her trade, Delos being made a free port. So Rhodes remained free, though always watched rather suspiciously by the Romans, and during the next eighty years, while Rome was gradually strengthening her hold on Asia, and bringing under her control Greece, Pergamos, and Cappadocia, the Rhodians remained quiet and waited for an opportunity to reinstate themselves in the good graces of Rome.

This opportunity came in 88 B.C. when Mithridates, King of Pontus, profiting by the Social War in Italy, took the field against the Roman arms. He was immediately joined by almost all the Greek towns in Asia Minor which had been suffering under Roman mal-administration for eighty years. Rhodes, however, stood out against him, and suffered a siege which, though Mithridates conducted it in person, proved quite unsuccessful. This war, which was brought to an end by Sulla in 84, after the victories of Chaeronea and Orchomenus, proved advantageous to Rhodes in two main directions - first, to her trade because Delos, which alone of all the states in European Greece had stood out for Rome against Mithridates, was captured and destroyed by him, and so ceased to be an effective commercial rival of Rhodes; and secondly, to her dominion, because, by Sulla's settlement of Asia, those parts of Caria and Lycia which had been taken away in 166, were restored.

Rhodes was now more secure and settled. Her pleasant climate had gained her a reputation as a resort for wealthy Romans, and a School of eclectic oratory, which sprang up under Apollonius Molon, attracted men of note to visit there. Thus Cicero studied under /



under this rhetorician at Rhodes, as also did Julius Caesar, Brutus, and Cassius. Caesar, however, had other interests besides rhetoric, and in 74 B.C. when Mithridates broke out again in opposition to Rome, he raised a volunteer force on the island, and crossed to Asia to oppose the Pontic King. After Caesar, Pompey became so popular at Rhodes on account of his suppression of the Cilician pirates in 66 - an achievement in which he was well aided by Rhodian ships - that after the third Triumvirate had been formed, and failed, and war was inevitable between Caesar and Pompey, it was to Pompey that the Rhodians lent their ships. Eventually, however, as Caesar got the upper hand, they changed sides and supplied ships to Caesar for his Egyptian campaign.

Caesar became Imperator in 46, and was assassinated two years later, and the Rhodians again became entangled in the civil war that followed his death. In 43 they supplied ships to Dolabella, but refused the same help to Cassius, who promptly besieged the city, as he was proceeding west against Octavian. It is stated by some that the city was delivered over to Cassius by treachery. At any rate, Rhodes was captured, and robbed of all its treasures in order to fill the empty war-chest of Caesar's enemies. The Temples were ransacked, and all their gold and silver plundered. Among the works of art carried off were the famed groups of the Laocoon, and the Farnese Bull. Not content with this, Cassius burnt or destroyed all the ships which for so long had been the pride of Rhodes and on which her commercial supremacy had depended. Then he left a garrison in the island, and went on his way to defeat and death at Philippi.

It was, of course, inevitable that so small a state as Rhodes should finally be absorbed by so great an empire as Rome. The pity is that this absorption was effected in so drastic a fashion. The island never recovered from the wanton destruction which it suffered at the hands of Cassius. Its fleet, and consequently its commercial power, was gone, and with these seemed to disappear also that spirit of enterprise and endeavour which had animated the Rhodians in their more prosperous days. The control of the destiny of the island passed very soon /

soon into other hands. The Greek populace sank rapidly to the condition of dependents, in which, save for a brief interval of twenty years, they have remained until the present day; and any glory or importance that came to Rhodes in the middle ages came to her almost wholly from the outside.

The history of the island during the first six centuries of the Christian era is very uneventful. It served as a place of retirement for Tiberius before he succeeded to the dignity of Emperor when Augustus died in the year 14. Under Claudius, the freedom of Rhodes was taken away on account of the alleged execution of Roman citizens, but was restored some nine years later. Soon after this, in 67, that memorable year which saw the rise and fall of three successive Emperors, Vespasian passed through the city on his way from the army in Syria, whence he went to take up the reins of empire at Rome. It was under this Vespasian that Rhodes was at last formally added to the provinces of Rome - being attached probably to the great province of Asia. In 157 a disastrous earthquake completed the destruction of the city which Cassius had begun in 43 B.C. This earthquake recalls the previous one which threw down the Colossus nearly 400 years before; but on this occasion there were no friendly states to send gifts for the restoration of the city. The Emperor Antonius P~~i~~scus, however, rebuilt the city at his own cost. About the year 300, when the Roman provinces were rearranged under Diocletian, Rhodes was made the capital of the newly-formed "Province of the Islands", and this position it retained, even after 395, when, at the division of the Empire in the reign of Theodosius, it passed under the dominion of the Byzantine dynasty.

Rhodes had remained always very quiet under the Roman rule, and rested secure so long as the Empire was strong enough to maintain peace within its borders. But with the decline of the empire came times of stress for the island, which again became entangled in the wars of the surrounding states, and in the conquests of the great powers /

powers that disputed the possession of the East.

After their defeat at the end of the second century by Claudius Gothicus, the Goths, who came to make themselves so terrible in Roman eyes, threatened Rhodes, but were scattered before they did any harm. About two hundred years later, a band of Isaurians ravaged the island, but could effect no permanent footing on account of the strength of the garrison. A hundred years later still, in distant Arabia, Mahomet was born - Mahomet who was destined to begin that great struggle which raged so long between his followers and the Christian nations of Europe, and which incidentally involved Rhodes again in sieges and battles which were not of her own seeking. For Mahomet did more than found a religion. He instituted an army, which in the name of religion over-ran the whole of the eastern states: rapidly bringing first Persia, and then Syria under its dominion, and battering finally at the walls of Constantinople - the capital of the Byzantine empire. Syria was conquered in 637, and left in the power of Muawiyeh, who zealously advanced the standards of Islam westward, scouring the Mediterranean with his fleet, and making successful descents on Cyprus and Rhodes. Dominion was not all that the Saracens fought for: plunder too was dear to their hearts, and at Rhodes they showed their greed by selling, to a Jew of Edessa, the fragments of the great Colossus which had lain, broken as the earthquake had left them, for nearly 900 years. The Saracens did not long retain their hold on the island, for though they achieved a great naval victory in the following year off Phoenicos in Lycia, over the Byzantine fleet, peace was made in 658, when Rhodes was, by agreement, restored to the Empire.

This treaty served only as a temporary check to the oncoming Paynims, who began to threaten Constantinople again about thirty years later. This time, Anastasius II, making Rhodes his base, collected a large fleet to oppose them and bar their progress. But unfortunately for Rhodes, sedition arose in the fleet. An ecclesiastic who had been placed in command was assassinated; and while part of the fleet sailed /



sailed for Constantinople to depose the Emperor against whom they had revolted, the rest dispersed. As a result, the Saracen fleet sailed unopposed to the Byzantine capital, and captured Rhodes on the way. This second expedition, however, also proved unsuccessful for the Mohammedans. Their fleet was destroyed by storm and fire, and they were glad to make peace in the following year and to restore to the Empire the twice-captured island.

After this, Rhodes rested secure from Saracen attacks for about a century - indeed, until the magnificent Harem-ar-Rashîd, the calif of Bagdad, and the hero of many of the tales in the "Arabian Nights", made a descent in 807 on the island, and though unable to take the city, ravaged the country and smaller towns.

The next five centuries which followed, namely, the ninth to the thirteenth, are full of history so far as the eastern Mediterranean is concerned. They witnessed the wars of the crusades; the rise to power in the Levant of the Venetian Republic; the fall of the Greek Empire of Constantinople; the brief period of dominion enjoyed by the Latin empire which displaced it; and, finally, the appearance of the Genoese as naval and commercial rivals of the Venetians. Rhodes had a part by no means honourable in all these disputes. She was no longer, as in the old days, an independent power that had to be reckoned with, but only a little island now that was bandied about among the contending rivals, and always at the mercy of whichever happened at the time to have the strongest fleet.

Crusading armies passed the island on the way to the Holy Land, and there is a record that Richard Cœur de Lion and Philip of France each spent a few days on shore on their way to and from Palestine during the Third Crusade. Rhodian merchant vessels carried supplies to the armies at the seat of war, and were also employed as transports for troops.

The interest of the Venetians in the Crusades was avowedly more /

more commercial than religious. They never lent their help against the infidel without stipulating beforehand what their reward should be, and the return they claimed was always some commercial privilege. Since the beginning of the ninth century, Venice had been pressing further and further east, and the effect was felt by Rhodes, especially after 1082 when a Golden Bull threw her harbour, among others, open to Venetian trade. It is probable too that about this time a number of private Venetian traders settled on the island, although it was not officially regarded by the Republic as of <sup>such</sup> great importance as some of the islands in the Aegean Sea. In 1099 a Venetian fleet, bound for the Holy Land, put in at Rhodes with the intention of wintering there. The island was still under Byzantine rule, and the Greek Emperor, Alexos, seems to have resented this liberty which the Venetians took. Indeed he had for some time been watching with great alarm the general encroachment of the Venetian traders into the heart of his realm, and the establishment of a Latin Kingdom at Jerusalem by the Crusaders was an additional vexation to him. He, therefore, made an attempt to induce the Venetians to leave Rhodes and return home, and on being refused, incited the Pisans, their Italian rivals, to attack their fleet. This venture, however, was entirely unsuccessful, for the Pisans were severely defeated, and the Venetian ships remained at Rhodes undisturbed until May of the next year.

Venice now made rapid strides in her expansion in the East. Sidon fell to Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, with the help of Venetian men and ships - a conquest which gave to Venice a quarter of that city and certain trading rights of great commercial value. Other coast towns met with the same fate, and Venice claimed the same share in the conquest, so that very soon she had gathered into her dominion a large part of Syria. This rapid expansion of the Venetians caused such great disquiet to the Greek Emperor, that in 1118 Calojohannes took the bold step of cancelling all the trading privileges which the Republic enjoyed within the Byzantine Empire. To this edict the Venetians were now strong enough to reply by force, and in 1125 when Rhodes /

Rhodes had refused, in obedience to the Emperor's command, to supply one of their fleets which called there, they attacked and captured the city, looted it of all its treasures and carried off its children as slaves. So severe was this reprisal that the Greek Emperor was forced almost immediately to restore to Venice the privileges which he had wished to withhold.

Although the Venetians had Rhodes at their mercy, they seem to have taken no steps to retain it as one of their eastern possessions. Indeed, they appear to have regarded the island as of little worth: for it is not likely that, had it been, as it used to be, an important trading centre, or one that might have brought them any increase in commerce or revenue, they would have destroyed the city as they did. Another, and perhaps a more notable instance of this neglect which Venice showed to Rhodes occurred at the beginning of the next century. In 1204 the Crusaders, headed by a powerful Venetian army, entered and sacked Constantinople, and drove the Greek Emperor from the throne. The Byzantine Empire was then divided among the Crusaders, and of it the Venetians claimed and got the lion's share. Rhodes, among other places, was assigned to them, but so little heed did they take of it that the Byzantine governor, by name Leon Gabalas, was able to declare the island independent, and to remain in power for twenty years.

The Greek Emperor, driven in 1204 from Constantinople, had taken up a position at Nicaea in Asia Minor, and begun to retrieve his fallen fortunes. Vatatses, who was Emperor in 1224 was powerful enough to recapture a number of islands off the Asiatic coast, and to demand and receive the allegiance of Rhodes. On this occasion the Venetians again made no move, and it was not until 1134, when Gabalas, who had revolted from Vatatses and was threatened by the Greek army, sent for aid to Venice, that the Republic interested itself in a practical way in the island which had fallen to its lot some thirty years before. A treaty was made between Venice and Rhodes, but Gabalas was not treated with any severity as his revolt of 1204 might have /



have warranted. He seems to have been left practically independent, though under Venetian supervision, which was so nominal, that his brother John, who succeeded him, found it quite easy to transfer his allegiance back to Vatatses without any interference from the Venetians.

The explanation of this neglect on the part of Venice is doubtless to be found in the alteration of the trade-routes of the Mediterranean. This change was due in large measure to the advances which had been made in the art of navigation, but more perhaps to the fact that the commercial supremacy had passed westward into the hands of another power. Merchant vessels no longer hugged the shore as they did in the earlier days, and crept round by the coast of Palestine from the south to gain the northern ports. The bulk of the Mediterranean trade did not pass now between the centres of Greece and Egypt, but converged to the great markets of Venice. The Venetians had four eastern trade-routes, which were prescribed by Government. All of these went down the Adriatic as far as Crete, and there diverged. One proceeded to Constantinople and the towns on the Black Sea; another went round by the coast of Morea and among the islands of the Archipelago as far as the Dardanelles; a third struck right across to Alexandria; while the fourth had for its destination the rich ports of Tripoli and Beirut on the Syrian coast, and incidentally passed through Rhodes and other towns on the south of Asia Minor. It is probable that these official routes did not change much even after the control of them had passed from Venetian into Genoese hands.

It was the 13th century that saw the rise of Genoa as a naval power in the Mediterranean and a formidable rival to Venice, and the beginning of a long struggle between the two peoples which ended in the shattering of the strength of Venice at sea. In this war Rhodes again became a victim of rivalry, for the Genoese, as they pressed eastwards in the Levant, must needs show their power by an attack on the city, which they captured in 1248 and held for two years. A crusading fleet of theirs made a night attack and took possession of the /

the town. But they were not in sufficient force to possess themselves of the whole island, for Vatatses of Nicaea was able with a small force to blockade them within the walls. The siege lasted for some time without success, until William of Villehardouin, who came to the support of the Genoese with a hundred knights, roused Vatatses to send a large reinforcement. With these the knights risked an engagement in the open, but were out-numbered and defeated. The blockade of the city was then continued until eventually the combatants came to an agreement, and the Genoese left the island, under honourable terms, in 1250.

This was not the end of the Genoese dealings with Rhodes. In 1261 the Latin Empire, which had been established so proudly by Venice and the Crusaders in 1204, gave way before the advance of the Greek Emperor, Michael Palaiologos, who returned in force from Nicaea. Meantime Venice had been at war with Genoa, and had sustained severe losses. Michael, therefore, allied himself with the victorious Genoese, who straightway made use of the harbours of Rhodes and the neighbouring islands in the piratical war which they still maintained against their rivals. Thus, though the island remained nominally under the dominion of the Greek empire, yet the Genoese pirates, notably Vignolo de Vignolo, while they made no attempt to administer or protect the country, held greater sway there than the Byzantines did. The Genoese were not the only pirates who visited Rhodes. Greek and Turkish vessels swarmed in that part of the Mediterranean with a similar intent, and, later on, made frequent raids on the island, and did much damage to the villages and country places generally.

With the beginning of the 14th Century a new and stirring chapter opened in the history of Rhodes. The city became again a centre not only of naval and military power, but also of successful commercial activity. The country districts were readministered, and shared in the general prosperity which came now to the island, but unfortunately lasted only about two hundred years. This renewal of good fortune was the result of the capture of Rhodes in

1309 by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, or the Knights Hospitallers, as they are often called.

The origin of this proud order of Knighthood was quite a humble one. Towards the end of the 11th century some merchants of Amalfi, inspired no doubt by the practices of the Arabs who had kept alive the art of medicine all through the dark ages, instituted at Jerusalem a rest-house for the succour and relief of pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre. The Brotherhood of men who devoted their lives to this service was formed into a recognised religious order at the close of the first Crusade in 1099. Their duties were at first wholly charitable, but about 1120, under their master, Raymond du Puy, they assumed a military character as well - a step which was copied some ten years later in the formation of the similar and rival order of the Knights Templars. These two colleges of military Knights remained in the Holy Land so long as they could hold their own against the aggressive Saracen. But the days of the Christian Kingdom in Palestine were numbered. Jerusalem yielded to the victorious Saladin in 1187;<sup>the</sup> knights retired first to Margat and afterwards, during the third Crusade, to Acre, where they rested undisturbed for almost exactly a hundred years. From Acre they were ousted after a long and well-fought siege in 1291. The Knights Templars, deeming their mission now completed, returned home, to live in ease and luxury on the wealthy estates which had been gifted to their Order in Europe. The Knights Hospitallers, however, were more loyal to their vows. They sailed no farther than the island of Cyprus where they re-formed their broken ranks at the coast town of Limasol. True to their old ideal of aiding pilgrims, they equipped vessels which called at the ports of Italy, and conducted pilgrims to and from the Holy Land - protecting them on their journey against the attacks of the Saracen pirate ships which abounded all over the Levant.

The Knights soon found that Limasol was not an ideal place for their headquarters. The fact that their residence was conditioned /



conditioned by the good pleasure of the King of the island restricted their enterprise to an uncomfortable degree. When, therefore, the Genoese free-booter, Vignolo de Vignolo, suggested to the Grand Master of the Order a joint attack on Rhodes and some of the neighbouring islands, the knights were not slow to fall in with the design, and made immediate preparations for the assault. Although at first their allied forces were successful, the siege dragged on for almost three years before the island finally surrendered. It is difficult to justify this capture by the Knights, for it appears nothing short of a piratical seizure. They may have excused themselves, however, on the ground that the island had given shelter to Saracen pirate ships, for they spread the report that the enterprise was a new crusade, and on this pretext obtained help from Andronicus, the Greek Emperor. It is probable that many of the knights who had lent their assistance withdrew when they learned the true nature of the expedition. This would account in some measure for the unduly protracted period of siege.

Having once possessed themselves of the island, the Knights set about strengthening the defences of the coast towns. The city itself naturally was first in importance, and this they fortified on the land side with a double rampart, designed with all the skill which engineering science of that day could command. Great care was also bestowed in guarding the harbours, and towers of great strength were built at the ends of the long moles which separated them from the open sea. Nor were the outlying districts neglected. To protect these from raids of Moslem pirates a ring of seventeen castles was built, all of which were connected by watch-towers set at intervals along the coast, and a special force of coastguards was formed from among the rural Greek populace to garrison these forts. One of them was built on the site of the old Acropolis of Lindos: another, called Phileremos, stood over the ruins of the citadel of Ialysos; a third, Pheraclos, on the Eastern coast, marked the spot where the Knights first landed on the island. This last was one of /

of the strongest of all these castles. and was used later on as a summer residence for the Grand Masters. and sometimes as a prison for unruly knights. Besides the ruins of these fortresses there are still to be seen in the island long stretches of a road which the knights laid between Rhodes and Phileremos. and at Zimboolee. a short distance south-east of the city. the remains are extant of a nine-arched aqueduct. an example also of the work of this period. The knights did not confine their attention to their own island. for they acquired and fortified others of which Cos was the most strategic. and built a castle on the mainland of Asia Minor at Helicarnassos. using the stones of the ruined Mausoleum which had been erected there by Artemisia nearly 1700 years before.

All this progress in fortification was not allowed to go on undisturbed. The Saracens whom the knights had expelled from Rhodes took refuge under the banner of Othman. the Bone-breaker. a prince of Bythinia who has given his name to the empire of the Turks. This man hated the Knights of St. John with the peculiar hatred which the Mussulman always showed to the Crusaders - in this case not only because they were hostile to his religion. but as much perhaps because they had established themselves so near the frontier of his own kingdom. He made a descent. therefore. on the island before the fortifications were complete. but was defeated and driven back. After this. as we are told by Porter in his "History of the Knights of Malta" - "the ramparts were restored to a state of perfect security. Trade was encouraged in every possible way. Merchants from every nation in Europe were tempted. by the freedom from restriction that the commerce of Rhodes enjoyed.....to make it their permanent residence. Within a few years its harbours were filled with rich argosies..... To protect this vast and annually increasing trade. the galleys of the Order. now grown into a regular fleet. traversed the Levant in all directions. at one time carrying the merchantmen to their destination. at another falling on the infidel corsair wherever he dared show his flag." Evidently the crusading spirit still /

still lived in the hearts of these knights who alone remained as an outpost of the Christian army in the East. As their position in Rhodes became more secure, so did their opposition to the Moslem become more aggressive. Thus in 1322 a treaty was concluded between Rhodes, Venice and Byzantium for the purpose of maintaining a permanent fleet to keep the Turks under control. The only result of this agreement was that the combined fleet of the allies, numbering twenty vessels, captured the fortress of Smyrna, which was garrisoned thereafter by a company of the Rhodian knights. About forty years later, at the instigation, and largely with the assistance of the Knights, a crusading force was mustered at Rhodes, whence it sailed to bring disaster to the Egyptian Saracens, and to sack their capital, Alexandria.

The Knights Hospitallers had been settled in Rhodes for scarcely a hundred years when they were threatened with a danger which, had it not been averted at the last moment by a fortunate accident, would have meant the almost certain extinction of their city and of their Order. In 1402 the invincible and cruel Tamerlane with his Tartar hordes bore down on Asia Minor and blockaded the little garrison of Knights in their castle at Smyrna. The siege was pursued with his characteristic impetuosity, and within fourteen days the defenders were overcome and massacred almost to a man. Tamerlane prepared then to attack the headquarters of these Knights, and proceeded to collect a fleet for this purpose. But, fortunately for Rhodes, while the ships were being gathered, news came to the great conqueror that his own Kingdom had been invaded by a King of India - a report which forced him to return with all speed to his eastern home. Thus the apprehension at Rhodes was temporarily relieved, until it was finally removed by the news that Tamerlane had died in 1405 before he could return to complete his conquests in the West.

The withdrawal of the Tartar forces left the way clear for the advance of the Ottoman Turks, who were at this time rapidly extending their dominion in Asia and Europe, and proving themselves the universal /



universal enemy of the Christian nations. Even their brother Moslems were afraid of them, for the Sultan of Egypt, noting their aggression, deemed it prudent in 1403, to make a treaty with the Grand Master at Rhodes, and even to submit to distinctly hard terms, in order to secure for himself some protection against the Ottomans. But as the years passed, the immediate need for this protection apparently vanished, and the treaty was violated by the Egyptians in 1440. A Moslem fleet of nineteen vessels made a descent on Rhodes, but were unable to force an entrance to the harbour and retired after an indecisive encounter off the coast. A very similar attack was made four years later, with more vigour and success. The Egyptians this time effected a landing, and according to one report, made a breach in the walls of the city with a battering-ram. Again, however, they were ultimately repulsed and the Knights left to repair and perfect their defences against future attacks from the advancing Turks, which they must have anticipated. Among the additions which were made to the fortifications about this time must be mentioned the Tower of St. Nicholas, which was built at the entrance to the principal harbour, and which, a few years later, proved of greatest importance in the defence of the city.

In 1443, Mohammed II. ascended the Ottoman throne, and so vigorous was the campaign he instituted against the Christian armies, that within ten years he had taken and sacked their great stronghold of Constantinople. This victory struck dismay throughout the whole of Christendom - not only because it added one to the long list of the Moslem conquests, but because it afforded the Turk an open door into Europe. Palestine had been conquered long before: Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa were all in the hands of the Mohammedans; Austria and Italy were now threatened; and Spain was almost subdued. But the little island of Rhodes remained defiant. The hopes of Christian Europe centred largely in its gallant defenders and their fleet which still was Mistress of the Mediterranean, while Mohammed saw /

saw in the island only a barrier to his advance on Italy. "First Constantinople, then Rhodes", had been his boast, and in 1455 he sent to demand tribute from the Knights. The refusal which they returned was tantamount to a declaration of defiance, and from that time, preparations were made on both sides for a siege. The Moslems, however, had to delay their attack until 1480. Mohammed was called away to meet more urgent trouble in Hungary, where he suffered defeat from the Christian army under Hunyadi, so that when he advanced against Rhodes, he found the Knights fully prepared to meet him. Peter D'Aubusson, the Grand Master, having perfected the fortifications of the walls and laid in a large store of supplies, collected the country people into the city and destroyed all the gardens round about it, thus affording no cover to the enemy. With 160 ships and 80,000 troops the Turks arrived under Palaiologos, a renegade Greek turned Mohammedan. The number of soldiers which the Turkish monarch had at his disposal was enormous; indeed, he seems to have relied, in this and in other engagements, more on force of numbers than on skill in tactics, for we find him very prodigal of the lives of his men. It is worthy of remark that in this siege the new methods of warfare which followed on the invention of gunpowder, were used on both sides. But cannon had not yet wholly displaced the older engines worked by pulleys, and the shot they fired were still of stone. Arrows were used, and armour was worn, just as in the ancient sieges, and the attacking parties, by sheltering under wooden turrets covered with raw hides, protected themselves from the Greek fire and boiling oil that the besieged poured down on them from the walls.

The first account of the siege was published as early as 1496 - only sixteen years after the event. It was written by Gulielmus Caoursin, Vice Chancellor of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and on it most of the later histories of the siege have been based. We are told that the plans of the city of Rhodes were betrayed to Mohammed by two renegades, Demetrio Sophiano, and Antonio Megalolo, the latter of whom is described as "a man unkind to God and man, noble of birth and evil of conditions and living, the which /

which, through evil guiding and unthriftiness had brought himself to poverty." It is not likely, however, that their drawings were of much assistance to the Turks, since they must have represented the fortifications before these were completed by D'Aubusson. Palaiologos found that he could not prevent supply ships from entering the harbour, and, therefore, made his first attack on Fort St. Nicholas, which guarded it. This he did by training "three bombards of great violence" on the tower from a point on the coast about 200 yards distant. The Knights attempted to silence this battery with rival bombards which threw "great and mighty stones" among the besiegers, but with so little success that the west side of the tower was battered down in six days. The Turks made an immediate attack with fifty galleys, and were repulsed with a loss of 700 men.

After this check, whilst the Grand Master employed 1000 of his men to rebuild the ruined walls of the fort, Palaiologos turned his attention to the walls of the city, and bombarded those of the Jewish quarter on the South. This was the weakest part of all the line of defence, because the wall approached so close to the sea at this point that no ditch was possible. D'Aubusson, knowing now the worth of the Turkish artillery, began with desperate haste to build a new wall inside the outer one which was being attacked. Houses were pulled down for this purpose, and everybody in the city - men, women and children, and even the nuns - lent their aid, and so rapidly was the work completed, that when the Turks succeeded in breaching the outer wall, this new line of fortification was there to meet and baffle them. In disappointment they turned again to the Tower of St. Nicholas, and planned against it another attack on a more elaborate scale, hoping this time to reach its defences by means of a floating bridge. But in this second attempt their success was no greater than in the first. The bridge was cut adrift, and their loss in men killed and drowned is estimated at about 3,000.

Even after these three repulses the Turks were not exhausted. They now made an attempt to win over the Greek populace by declaring that /



that their quarrel was with the Knights, not with the citizens. but, finding this unsuccessful, they prepared a grand attack on the walls of the Jewish quarter which had been weakened by their previous assault, and on the new defences which had been raised behind them. "Now", says Caoursin, "they ordained and dressed all their bombards and guns of war, all their ordonnance and their might, against the principal strength and the most newest walls of the city." According to the practices of Mohammedans they made great ceremonial preparations for the attack, and even "brought sacks with them to put in the goods of Rhodes, and tied at their girdles ropes to bind their prisoners, for they hoped in their god Mahumet that they should without fail have victory." The assault was very nearly successful. As many as 2,500 Turks gained a position on the broken ramparts and set their standards waving there, while some 40,000 eager Moslems pressed on behind them. The city would surely have been taken had not D'Aubusson himself headed a gallant charge of his Knights, which, after a long and severe struggle, turned the van of the Turkish forces and sent them in retreat to their camp. Palaiologos at last acknowledged himself beaten and began to embark his troops for the mainland, hurrying his preparations when news came that reinforcements from Italy were on their way to succour the Knights.

Rhodes had beaten off the Turks, but their repulse was only temporary, and of this the Knights were fully aware. As for Mohammed, he must have been sorely disappointed, if not humiliated, by the failure of his General, for it is reported that he meditated another attack in person on the island, and doubtless, would have carried out his threat had not death overtaken him in 1481. During his reign he had advanced the Ottoman standard far to the west, and only at two points - Belgrade and Rhodes - had he been successfully defied. Belgrade was the key to the Danube, and checked his westward progress on the mainland of Europe: Rhodes dominated the Aegean Sea, and prevented his supremacy on the Mediterranean; and he died before either of these places was subdued. His immediate successors were men /

men of different calibre, and did not follow up his conquests. Thus the Knights were allowed a sufficient period to recover from the severe shock they had received.

It was not until 1520, when Suleyman I. surnamed the Magnificent, succeeded to the Ottoman throne, that any acute danger threatened Rhodes. This prince was a leader of exceptional power and resource. Within a year of his accession he had attacked and captured Belgrade, and in February of 1522, was collecting a fleet and an army to reduce Rhodes in the same way. On receiving news of this muster, the Knights, under the guidance of L'Ile Adam, who was Grand Master at that time, made hasty preparations for the assault which was delivered in June of the same year. The details of this second siege are more modern, and consequently less stirring than those of the previous attack in 1480. Everything was on a much larger scale. The artillery used was of a more powerful and efficient type, and was far more extensively employed than it had been before. The forces of the Turks were more than doubled, as many as 200,000 men being landed on the island - a figure which does not include the reinforcements which augmented the Turkish force during the siege. Added to all this was the fact that their great army was commanded by Suleyman in person, a general more able, more determined, and more reckless of the lives of his soldiers, if that were possible, than Palaiologos had been. It was almost a foregone conclusion that eventually the city would have to submit to the besieging force, for it was but a matter of time till the Turkish guns should batter down the walls, whose defenders numbered only some 600 Knights and about 7,000 others under arms, including slaves.

Having disembarked their enormous army about the end of June, the Turks lost no time in setting to work. They began to approach the city by making two great earth-works, the one directed against the walls of the Jewish quarter which had suffered so badly in the previous siege, and which now were guarded by the Knights of Italy; the other against a point on the west of the town where the walls appear /

appear to have been almost equally vulnerable. The construction of these earth-works was carried out with great doggedness on the part of the besiegers, although it must have cost the lives of thousands of their men, who were killed in the trenches by the cannonades and sallies of the Knights. Besides this, the batteries of the Turks were brought into position within three days, and a general bombardment of the city began. This was soon concentrated on the southern side, between the two earth-works, and was of so severe a nature that four breaches were made in the walls, the most serious of which was at a point at the south-west corner of the town, where the Knights of Aragon were stationed. But though the enemy had succeeded in breaking down the defences at these points, they could thereby force no entrance into the city, for each of the breaches was partly rebuilt and vigilantly guarded by the Knights and the armed citizens who fought with them. By September, the Turks had turned to mining, and although thirty-two out of the forty-five mines they laid were met and defeated by counter-mining, the few which did explode succeeded in widening the breaches to a considerable degree. The most serious attack during the whole siege was delivered towards the end of the same month, when a simultaneous assault was made on all the breaches by the land forces, and on the harbour by a fleet. At every point, however, the Turks were repulsed with enormous losses, although at the walls of the Knights of Aragon they held their own for three long hours, until a charge, headed by the Grand Master himself, dislodged them.

Suleyman had been so sure that this attack would end in victory that he had mounted a tower of ships' masts to watch the triumphant entry of his soldiers into the city. But it was their retreat he witnessed instead. In the days that followed, while the Turkish monarch hesitated in his attack and was thinking of abandoning the siege, the Knights within the walls relaxed no effort. Behind the old wall of Aragon a new line of fortification was erected, at a distance of 60 yards from the breach. A second wall was also constructed in the Jewish quarter, where it was found necessary to pull down /



down, along with other buildings, the Church of Our Lady of Victory, which had been built in 1481 to commemorate the city's deliverance in the last siege. During October and November, the Turks made as many as six separate attacks in force on the broken walls, but in every case, owing partly to misfortune, and partly to the bravery of the defenders, they were driven back to their camp. After these five months they were still outside the city, still baffled by the wonderful resistance which the Knights had shown. But in the beginning of December, with the energy almost of despair, they concentrated the whole of their forces on the wall of Aragon, which was by that time the weakest point of the defences, and were able, after a severe struggle, to drive the Knights behind their newly-built wall, and to establish themselves inside the city. This led to negotiations for peace, because the issue of the siege was now apparent to both parties. Of the garrison, 3,000 men, including between two and three hundred of the Knights, had been killed, while only about 1,500 of the remainder were capable of continuing under arms. It would have been folly on the part of the Grand Master to maintain his resistance further, for though the Turks had lost nearly half their men - 44,000 being killed and as many dead from disease - yet they had still almost unlimited reinforcements to draw upon. Nor did Suleyman, Turk though he was, desire the annihilation of this band of men who had put up so gallant a fight against such odds. On 20th December, therefore, the Knights capitulated under honourable terms, and Suleyman entered the city and claimed the island for his own. The terms of the Treaty were extremely lenient. All who wished, Knights and citizens alike, were allowed to leave the island within twelve days, taking with them whatever goods they chose. Those who remained were promised free exercise of their religion: their Churches were not to be desecrated: their children were to be exempted from military service; and no tribute was to be required from the island for five years. About 5,000 of the citizens preferred to leave their native shores along with the Knights, rather than submit to Ottoman dominion, and on all hands speedy preparations were made for departure. On the morning of /

of New Year's Day, 1523, the remnant of the Knights of the Order of St. John, sailed from the harbour, and left the island in the hands of the Mohammedan.

Very different are the estimates which have been given of these Knights who had occupied Rhodes for just over 200 years. Some have regarded them as little better than a band of adventurers, who lived by piracy and plunder, using the island only as their robber stronghold. But this is a prejudiced view of the case. There can be little doubt that the Knights did a great deal to bring prosperity to the whole island. The ruins of their roads and bridges are evidences of the improvements which they made in the country districts, while to show that they possessed the confidence of the native population, one has but to remember the siege of 1480, during which the Greeks in the city refused the offer of Turkish protection, or again, the fact that in 1522 so many of the citizens took advantage of Suleyman's permission to leave the island, and cast in their lot with the departing Knights.

The four centuries which have passed since the capture of the city have added very little to the history of Rhodes. The island has gained nothing under Ottoman dominion. Indeed, any difference which has been made has been in the opposite direction. It is true that the Turks did not wantonly destroy the city as other conquerors might have done. Suleyman had the walls rebuilt in the same style by a band of 5,000 workmen imported from the mainland, and his soldiers refrained from defacing even the armorial bearings on the houses of the Knights. But though they did not destroy the buildings and public works which the Knights had erected, they made no attempt to keep them in repair, so that the most characteristic features of the island to-day are the ruins of its former greatness. Nor have the Turks moved a finger to maintain or increase the prosperity of their subjects, for prosperity they fear may bring political power - a thing which at any price must be guarded against. So long then as the taxes were duly paid, they were content to allow the Greek peasant to pass his life in toil and ignorance, and to watch the trade of the island growing less. The harbours /

harbours received no attention and have become silted up with sand, and it was possible for Biliotti and Cottrel, who published a volume, "L'île de Rhodes", in the island in 1881. to write, "To-day Rhodes has not a single expert seaman."

Being a maritime state, the island was first placed under the jurisdiction of the Captain Pasha or Admiral, but later on, a civil government took the place of this military control. Many of the governors who administered the island were guilty not only of neglect, but also of actual injury. The fine forests were converted into wealth for the Sultan and his ministers, and the taxes were often increased for the personal profit of the official Turks. Yet, on the whole, it cannot be said that the treatment meted out to Rhodes was very harsh or tyrannical. The Greeks who form the bulk of the population, have all along enjoyed what practically amounts to self-government. Their internal affairs have been left to their own administration, and the Greek language has been recognised as official in all court proceedings, and even in Government communications. Besides this, Rhodes has been specially favoured in having a share in the special charter which was granted to the whole group of the Sporades Islands by Suleyman I. in which he stipulated that in return for the payment of a single tax called "Macto", they should in future be self-governing so far as their internal affairs were concerned. This charter was confirmed by various "firmans" issued by the Sultans, as late as Abdul Hamid I. in 1774, who declared that "Islands paying taxes by contract are free in every point of view."

Although the Rhodian Greeks took no very active part in the Greek War of Independance which broke out in 1822. they suffered considerably as a result of the war, and gained nothing by it. We have it on the authority, not always unimpeachable, of Rottiers, in his "Description des Monumens de Rhodes", that for ten years before the revolt the island had enjoyed a period of exceptionally good administration under Youssouf Bey, and that there would probably have been no disturbance if he had been allowed to continue in office. But the resident /



resident Turks were jealous and suspicious of the Greeks, who outnumbered them, and formed a plot to have this impartial Governor removed. Youssouf was denounced at Constantinople as a traitor against his sovereign, and an infidel to his religion, but he pleaded his own cause so well that instead of being degraded as his enemies had hoped, he was actually promoted in the Imperial service. Unfortunately, however, his promotion necessitated his removal from Rhodes, and the Porte sent in his stead Mehemet Schukur Bey an old man of sixty years, by birth a Greek slave, who had behind him a chequered career of conspiracy and disgrace. This man had lost all his fortune in the enterprises in which he had been engaged, and Rhodes fell an easy prey to his greed. Making their sedition his excuse, he punished the Greeks with torture and death, and confiscated their possessions, and even from the Turks on the island he extorted much tax money, saying that big contributions and enormous sacrifices were necessary to maintain the war against the rebel subjects of the Sultan.

After the conclusion of this war affairs gradually became more normal and settled throughout the Greek provinces which still remained under the Ottoman sway, and Rhodes, along with the other islands in the Aegean Sea, began to prosper again under the old conditions of internal anarchy. Prosperity, however, was no advantage to these islands, for when the Turks noted it, they turned immediately to systematic repression. "Under the pretext of applying the "Law of the Vilayets" of 1863, and nominally in order to introduce a uniform administration in all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish officials were installed in places where they had not previously existed. Heavy taxes, quite out of all proportion to the revenues of the islands, were levied by officials, who even augmented them for their own personal benefit." Even in later and more enlightened times when the Young Turkish party came into power, these methods of repression were continued. In 1909, for example, in direct contradiction of ancient custom, the Greeks of Rhodes, as of the other Aegean islands, were included among those liable to conscription under the New/

New Military Law, which was passed in that year.

This brings the history of the island up to a very recent date. But there is still something to record, for Rhodes has again been brought into prominence by her connection with the two wars, in which, during the last twelve months, Turkey has been, and is at present engaged. The first of these was the war with Italy in which the possession of Tripoli was disputed, and the second, the war with the Balkan States, which has not yet been concluded.

At the beginning of the Turco-Italian war the fighting was confined entirely to Tripoli. But after hostilities had dragged on for some time, and the record of them was a monotonous series of indecisive encounters between the Italian forces and those of the Arab allies of the Turks, the Italian fleet was brought into action and seized certain of the Ottoman islands in the Aegean, the chief of which were Stamfalia and Rhodes. The reason for this action on the part of Italy was at the time an interesting matter for conjecture. She is a member of the Triple Alliance, and it was thought by some that her intention was to keep a permanent hold on these islands. Such a situation would probably have led to serious international complications, because of the very evident advantages which the possession of them would give to a member of the Triple Alliance against the rival Powers of the Triple Entente. Rhodes and Stamfalia lie very near to Egypt, and in case of war, if Italy had a naval base at either of these islands, she could do much to hamper, if not wholly prevent, the passage of British or other ships through the Suez Canal to India and the East. Events proved, however, that this was not the intention of the Italians. They had made the seizure only in order to be able to barter with Turkey for the possession of Tripoli, and when the peace-Treaty was signed in October 1912, they agreed to return the islands unreservedly to the Ottomans. At the same time there is said to have been some understanding that the Italian garrison should remain until all questions between Italy and Turkey were settled. Turkey is understood to have favoured this arrangement which served to guarantee the island against Greek designs and occupation, because by the time this treaty was made with Italy, the Turks had entered into /

into hostilities with Greece.

The Rhodians must have welcomed the arrival of the Italian fleet, and witnessed with delight the surrender of the Turkish garrison, which was an ever-present reminder to them of their subjection. Freed temporarily at least from the oppression of the Turks, they attempted to bring their case before the notice of the Great Powers, so that, should they be handed back to the Ottoman at the close of the war, they might have some guarantee that their ancient privileges would be restored. One might think, therefore, that they must have experienced keen disappointment when news reached them of the Treaty in which the Italians had undertaken to recall "their officers and troops, and also their civil functionaries.....from the islands occupied in the Aegean Sea." But it must be remembered that by this time the rising against Turkey in the Balkans had already broken out, so that any disappointment which the Greek islanders felt at the Turco-Italian Treaty must have been swallowed up in the larger and wider hopes with which the Balkan war inspired them. They could now look forward to their emancipation by their kinsmen, and to a day when they should obey no masters that were not Greek. The repulses which the Turks suffered at the hands of the allied troops, and the successes of the Greek fleet, were sufficient warrant for these expectations, and towards the end of the year it looked as if the Sultan would be forced to yield not only the islands, but the whole of his European possessions. The war, however, was not allowed to run its course, and hostilities were suspended to enable delegates from both parties to meet in conference and discuss a basis for a Treaty.

One of the demands which the Allied states made from the Turks was the cession of all the islands which they at present hold in the Aegean Sea. Rhodes is included in this demand, for, although, strictly speaking, it is the Mediterranean that washes her shores, the name "Aegean" is loosely applied to the whole group of islands in that neighbourhood. The Turkish delegates at once refused the terms which were offered them, but were quite unable to make any counter- /



counter-proposals of a nature acceptable to the Allies, so that the Peace Conference was brought to a close before it could effect any settlement. But it appears likely that the terms that Turkey refused will ultimately be forced upon her, if at any rate the allied armies maintain the promise which they showed in the early stages of the war.

The island of Rhodes will have her own share of profit from this repulse which the Ottomans have sustained. She has already suffered too much injustice at their hands. It was never fair that the Moslem Turks should lord it over an island whose people are Greek both in nationality and religion, nor that, having added it to their Empire, they should discharge scarcely any of the obligations that dominion brings. In the new epoch of her history which is now opening, Rhodes should find her true place at last as a part of the Greek Kingdom, and something of the old patriotic spirit may return and bring prosperity again to her shores. It will be indeed a fair day for the island when her harbours, which have seen the coming and going of so many conquerors, shall witness the final departure of the Turks, and when their crescent-flag shall wave no more above her citadel.

Writer's Motto:-

"Pro rege, lege, et grege."